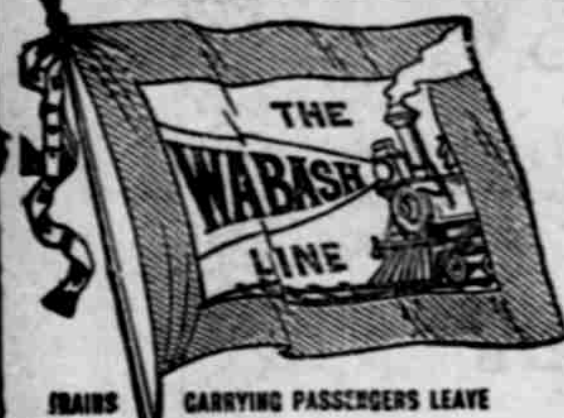


# THE CHARITON COURIER,

C. F. VANDIVER, Ed. and Prop.

KEYTESVILLE, - MISSOURI.

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Keytesville as follows:

### GOING EAST.

No. 12 St. Louis Mail and Ex.	11 15 a m
No. 8 Chicago Express.	9 45 p m
No. 22 Moberly Ac. Freight.	4 35 p m
No. 82 Ac. Freight.	6 05 p m
No. 8 Omaha Express.	1 45 a m

### GOING WEST.

No. 1 Kansas City Express.	5 45 a m
No. 11 K. O. Mail and Ex.	9 35 a m
No. 21 Accommodation Freight.	10 50 a m
No. 7 Omaha Express.	3 11 a m

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### CHAPTER V.—[CONTINUED.]

"A story?" she said, glancing up at him through her long lashes.

"A fairy story, if you like."

"His voice had grown very low, and it was with evident difficulty that he steeled it."

"Go on, Signor," she said, softly.

"Years ago, there lived a beautiful princess, so transcendently lovely, so brilliant, so talented that suitors came from far and near to attempt to win her favor. To her father's court there came a young man—what shall we say—poet. It was fatality. He saw in her the incarnation of his dreams, and loved her with a passion that only death itself could end. He knew that to have given his heart in this irrevocable way to an object so unattainable was, indeed, the very madness of folly. There was but one thing to be done—to say farewell to her forever—with the faint hope that she might have guessed something of his devotion and would give him in his exile an occasional kindly thought."

As he finished speaking La Tosca sat perfectly still, save for the tremulous motion of the lace upon her breast. She could not affect to misunderstand the meaning of his words, and a strange, wild joy filled her heart, not unmingled with a certain feeling of self-contempt. What did it mean? Had she, La Tosca, adored by half the gilded youth of Italy, and whose favors had been sued for in vain by the highest in the land, given her heart to this young man, who stood silent before her and whom she had only seen half a dozen times at most?

"Is this an allegory, signor?" she asked a little tremulously.

"Yes, madame."

Her fingers wandered over the keys, the beautiful head bent a little so that he could not see her face.

"The young man—I recognize," she said slowly. "But—the princess?"

"Is yourself!" he cried, losing all control. "Pardon, madame, my folly, my madness. You appeared before me, and I followed in a terrible dream, till I awoke prostrate at your feet on the steps of the temple where your beauty reigns. That is my excuse. Do not judge it. I beseech you, too harshly. Forget the poor, rash fool who dared to bask for one short hour in the sunlight of your smile. And now, madame, farewell."

No word escaped her lips. The dreamy music still went on. With a passionate gesture of despair he turned from her.

She raised her eyes and followed him with a glance as he moved toward the door. Like a lightning flash the whole truth was revealed to her. She loved him. The proud heart had found its master.

"Signor Cavaradosi!" she said softly.

As if moved by a steel spring, the young man turned and faced her.

With a sudden gesture, she rose and advanced toward him in that slow, graceful sinuous fashion that distinguished her. Her face was colorless, save for the red lips and dark gleam of her lustrous eyes, those marvelous eyes that seemed to sink into his very soul.

"Signor Cavaradosi," she began in her low, rich voice, stopping a pace or two from him and leaning with one arm upon the back of a tall, carved chair near her; "if I might be permitted to criticize your allegory, I should say this: Had I been your poet, and a real passion had ever entered, not into my head like a vain dream, but into my heart and into the blood of my veins, I swear I would have been a criminal, perhaps, but certainly I would never be a coward."

"Madame!"

She did not notice the interruption, but went on swiftly as if afraid to stop.

"If I loved, I would bravely look the matter full in the face. I should know at the first look whether I belonged wholly to the object of my passion, and I would abandon myself without weakness, without hypocritical reservations, to his embrace forever. I would do more, Signor Cavaradosi. I would wish a respected name, a stainless honor, a magnificent destiny before me, so that I could cast it all down, my life and my soul, at the feet of him I loved. If there were shame and disgrace for his sake, I would glory in it! I would throw down my gauntlet publicly, glad to lose the whole world, so there could be nothing in it except my love!"

With parted lips, and breath that came quick and fast, he bent toward her.

"Madame!" he cried, huskily. "For God's sake, do not play with my reason!"

"And if I had been disinclined, as would have been probable, for rarely is there such a love on both sides, I would find, yes, I would find a strange pleasure in the very excess of my humiliation. I would go alone, alone forever, to some obscure corner of the world, happy and smiling, to die of my wound."

She stopped, a faint color glowing in her cheeks, and a light in her eyes that made her whole face radiant.

Mario stood for an instant, as if turned to marble. What wild fancy was it that now had arisen and was crying aloud to him for credence? Then, suddenly, the long pent up passion of his heart burst forth in a torrent of words. He implored her to tell him the truth; if there was one shadow of a chance of his love being returned. "Answer me, answer me!" he cried, "only one word."

"This is my answer," she murmured, flinging herself into his arms. "I remain in Rome! I love you!"

### CHAPTER VI.

"How charming you are this afternoon. You look like one of the blonde

heroes of the Norse legends."

"How absurd you are, Signor Roswein! You remind me of the Chevalier de Carnelles, who told me last night I was a divinity."

They were sitting in the little garden, Karl and Marta, under the shadow of the vines. Old Sertorius was in Rome, attending to his lessons, and Karl, who had walked out the day after his great success, had found Marta alone.

"You and your father are the best people in the world, Marta," drawing a little closer to the young girl's side.

"Hush!" she said, suddenly, somewhat embarrassed and a little fearful at the young man's manner. "Listen! The Angelus is ringing. How beautiful the bells sound across the meadows."

They listened a moment in silence. Then Karl said: "All village bells are alike. They recall to me my childhood. Ah! in fifteen years what a change in my life and thoughts!"

"Fifteen years ago, at this time, what were you doing?" asked Marta absently.

"I was gathering together my goats on the edge of the woods. The ringing of the Angelus in the little church was the signal for my return. I remember I used to stop on a point of rocks to see the woodcutters light their fires under the dark fir trees; at my feet, the lights on the fishing-vessels glimmered through the mist above my head were the stars; the falling dew filled the air with perfume. By fits and starts the savage voice of the Illyrian sea answered to the gentle whispering of the forest leaves. What a tranquil scene it was, and what joy filled my heart. I would lie awake for hours before my open window, lost in a sort of ecstasy. Then I would pass, without knowing it, from a sweet wakefulness to a peaceful sleep, as an infant passes from one dream to another. I was happy."

Marta looked at him, wondering, and then said a little sarcastically: "Seriously, Karl, and poetry apart, would you care for that happiness today?"

"Yes, Marta," he answered quickly; "yes, if I could find in my poverty and obscurity the peace, the divine peace, of my early years!"

"Peace is in the heart," she said softly.

"It is not in mine; neither in my heart nor in my brain. Never!"

Marta shivered, as if a cold wind had suddenly struck her.

"What do you wish me to say?" she said. "I am very sorry." And she turned away and began plucking the jasmine leaves behind her.

"I was to have been a priest, did you know that? The old cure of Saint Luke's was very fond of me and taught me Latin. He wished to fit me for his place some day. He is still alive. I am tempted sometimes to go and seek him out. The old presbytery with its court full of moss, its lindens, and its fountain, appear to me an enchanted asylum. I would make a good enough priest for the country. Nothing would be lacking—except faith."

"If you wish to talk nonsense in my presence, Signor Roswein," interrupted Marta, passionately, "let it be on other subjects. I have no patience with you!"

"What! anger in you? There is blood in your veins of marble. The sea of ice has its tempests, then?"

"You desire to be alone, it seems," said Marta, rising to her feet.

"Ah! I have offended you," he cried, in a pleading tone. "Pardon me! It is the first time in my life and it shall be the last. Marta, I feel that I must leave you. This part that you are playing, this mask of coldness and harshness which you wear for me, must weigh heavily upon you. I am certain. I will free you from it; you shall never see me again. I will never cross the threshold of this house. I promise you. I ought to have understood you, or rather, I did understand you, but my courage failed me. Now, my resolution is taken. Only, do not let us part in anger. Give me your hand in token that I am forgiven."

Marta, who, while he was speaking, had gradually sank down to his side again, silently extended her hand.

"Farewell," he said, raising it to his lips, and turned away.

She watched him as he slowly walked down the path, a multitude of emotions stirring her apparently placid breast.

Just as he reached the gateway, she called to him.

In a moment he was by her side again.

"And my father, Karl?" she said gently.

"Poor old man," he answered, with a sigh. "At least don't let him think me ungrateful, Marta. Tell him all. Tell him the truth."

"The truth? I must know what it is first, Karl."

Roswein steeled himself against the back of the seat. "Tell him," he said, "tell him that I loved you and that you did not love me."

Marta was silent for a moment. Then in a low, scarcely audible voice, she said:

"I do not love you. No! I could not love you. Other sentiments would separate me from you forever."

Karl uttered a cry.

"Other sentiments! Ah! that is the last blow. I hoped that you loved only heaven!"

"I could not love you, Karl," she continued, not noticing the interruption, "and it is best, believe me, best for both of us, for you above all. The life which will be your portion must have no chains. Your future must not be spoiled by the lowly dream of your youth. I would never forgive myself if I should bind your beautiful artist's

life to the hearth and household cares."

"I hate an artist's life," he cried excitedly. "Since I have known my own feelings, my love for you has increased the disgust it inspires in me."

"What is there so terrible in it? I don't understand you."

"Ah! your father would understand me. He knows the difference between the real and the ideal. He has much reason, believe me, Marta, for the contempt he feels for all that pertains to the studio or the theater. A hell, full of flames and darkness, a world without law, a world without truth, which revolts you, as it rivets your bonds. Your father knows it. He knows what temptations inhabit this boiling chaos, and how hard it is for the best of us to defy them."

"You, at least, Karl, will defy them. I know you."

"You know me, Marta; yes, my life for so many years has been like the twin of yours, you ought to know me. And you think I was born for good?"

"You, or no other."

"You do me injustice. God knows I love good as I love the face of heaven. And yet, the poison enters into my soul despite myself. Mixed with my art and my work are, I know not what hideous dreams; what horrible fancies. Ah! those of us who have near us a mother, a sister, a family, those are fortunate. They have an antidote for the poison. If I am alone, this fictitious world envelops me, possesses me without cessation. My only hope was in you, dear Marta, for the present and the future. How many times has your dear face risen before me in the midst of temptation and given me courage. That peace that I seek, I found only in your eyes; that strength which I need, passed into my heart when I touched your hand. Ah! to live here with you and your father, in the holy calm of the household, under the safeguard of your virtue, to live here! to die here! Ah! why did the thought ever come to me?" And, overcome with emotion, he buried his face in his hands.

Her eyes full of tears, Marta said, very gently: "Have I ever—be just, Karl—have I ever spared anything to drive this thought away?"

"Never! In your presence, I could not deceive myself. Your words, your looks, for the past year, have told me that you did not care for me. But, as soon as I left you, the old hope would return. I would recall a look a little less cold, a word a little more kind, and I would live upon that. I have tried to persuade myself that your filial duty made you conceal your real sentiments; that your father's horror of the name of artist was the only obstacle which separated us."

Marta's eyes fell, and a vivid blush suffused her cheek.

"And if it were the only one," she murmured, "it would be sufficient."

"Ah!" with a cry, "I would have overcome that!"

"Never, Karl."

"Yes, I say yes. It was a plan which I have had in my head for a long time. I was thinking of it as I came here to-day, but your first look dashed it to the ground. In spite of myself, your father has a higher opinion of me since last night. You know, Marta, how he is moved by a success which was the ambition of his youth. I would have taken advantage of his only weakness. I would have offered him on my knees my freshly won laurels. He would have forgotten the artist, he would have opened his arms, he would have granted me all."

The girl had listened to him in breathless attention. As he finished one word escaped from her trembling lips:

"Try!"

"What!" he cried, scarcely believing his ears. "You love me, then! You love me!"

"Hush!" she cried, putting him from her. "Not one word more. Leave me, now. Come again to-morrow or next day and try our plan. Go! Go! I can bear no more!"

Karl seized her hand, covered it with kisses, and obeyed. She stood watching him, as he went down the long, white road, with an expression half of joy, half of fear. Was the first prediction? He had spoken the truth: she knew it in every fibre of her heart. He loved her now; yes, but he was weak, so weak.

With flying feet Karl sped toward Rome, all shadows, all morbid fancies gone. At last, he had obtained the desire of his heart. He rushed up the stairs of his lodging and threw open the door to find the Chevalier de Carnelles there.

"She loves me! She loves me!" he cried.

"Who loves you, you triple idiot?" exclaimed his patron, starting to his feet.

"Marta!"

"For an instant the Chevalier stood still, white with fury.

"Oh! this is what I feared," he muttered.

Then, advancing toward Karl with a terrible look upon his face, he said:

"Have you forgotten all that I said to you the other night in the cafe? Did you think I spoke without thought? I told you I would not allow you to ruin yourself! Great Heaven! You have had a glorious, a marvelous success, and your first thought is to run to this young girl, who will plant turnips in your heart. Come! come! Sit down and let us talk reasonably."

Karl obeyed without a word, all his enthusiasm cooled.

"If you care for me, Chevalier," he said, "let me be happy in my own way."

"You wish to be happy, you say," returned the Chevalier, gradually recovering from his first burst of anger. "If you could be so in this life you dream of, I care for you enough, yes, enough, to sacrifice my happiness for yours. But what creature can be happy outside of the life he was born for—outside of his destiny?"

"I shall not be! I defy you to be. You would have just the happiness of those false monks whom a mistaken vocation has cast into the cloister, and who die of consumption, gnawing the bars of their cells."

"Bah! Platitudes!"

"Platitudes, you impudent knave! No! no! I will not be angry with you. Ah! while you were making love to the daughter of that old fool of a genius, if you only knew in what terms one of the most celebrated women of her time was speaking to me of you."

"Ah!" indifferently. "Who was that?"

"Lady Hamilton! You must have noticed her last night, in the box to the left of the stage."

"Thirty years old—half like a raven's wing—a naughty look in her eyes—and shoulders like liquid marble?"

"Ah! exactly!" responded the Chevalier, smiling. "You noticed that, and you wish to marry! My friend, those shoulders will rise up more than once between your wife and you. Well, Karl, this magnificent being was talking of you not an hour ago."

"Yes? What did she say?"

"She said," answered De Carnelles, impressively, "She said—listen, now, a woman who has the world at her feet—she said: 'My dear Chevalier, will you present this eminent young man to me some day?'"

Roswein laughed outright.

"Is that all?"

"All?" cried De Carnelles, indignantly. "What would you have, you shameless bandit? Would you have her come here to seek you?"

"Seriously, Chevalier," said Karl, "I am very sorry you won't be present at my wedding. Do you really leave for Madrid to-morrow?"

"I should like to dash your brains out before I go for being such an idiot. But, my boy, promise me that you will do one little thing for me."

"You know you can command me, Chevalier, to the best of my ability."

"It is a promise then?"

"Anything in reason, yes."

"Do I ever ask anything unreasonable, you dog? But this is very simple. Go and see Lady Hamilton to-morrow."

Karl started.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed.

"Impossible! Why impossible? Is a tete-a-tete with a pretty woman such a disagreeable thing?"

"But what excuse?"

"She has asked me to present you and then—you have a handkerchief of hers, I believe?"

"How did you know?" exclaimed Roswein, with a slight access of color. The Chevalier smiled a peculiar smile.

"My eyes are still good, my boy. When a lady, overcome by her enthusiasm, throws you a bouquet and with it, inadvertently, her handkerchief, the least you can do is to return the latter. Come, promise!"

"I do not see why you should care," said Roswein hesitatingly; but, since you wish it, Chevalier, I promise."

"Good! and when I return from Spain, I shall find you cured of your marriage fever, I hope. Good-bye! Not another word. I shall see you before I go," and the Chevalier strolled jactantly out of the room and down the stairs, humming Boadilly's song.

(To Be Continued.)

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